



April 2, 2009

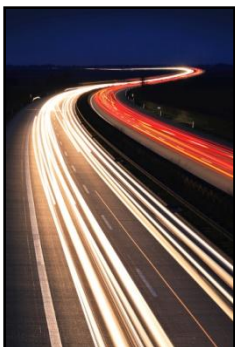
## Budgets, budgets, budgets...

Greetings friends and neighbors,

Week twelve of the 2009 legislative session is nearly complete, and we finally have budget proposals from the majority party! Being that it's the single most important issue of the session (which will only last three more weeks), I'm surprised they waited as long as they did before sharing their ideas with us.

Having said that, I'm pleased to report we now have six budget proposals to consider...a transportation budget, a capital budget and an operating budget from the majority party in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

**SENATE TRANSPORTATION BUDGET PROPOSAL:** The transportation budget proposal passed the full Senate earlier this week. I voted in favor of it for a number of reasons. First, I know the budget is not perfect. Some around here are fond of saying that no budget is ever perfect, but it does spend money on transportation projects that had been promised in the 9.5 cent and nickel gas tax packages. This budget fulfils most of the state's obligation to fund those projects.



The overall number of projects funded in Pierce County is more than I expected. As you may or may not know, I'm working with a coalition of Pierce County representatives and senators toward obtaining funding for transportation projects in Pierce County. We met this week to compare House and Senate transportation budgets and found some differences between the two. As these budgets move forward through the process, they will be amended and the final version that becomes law will likely look

### CONTACT ME

**E-MAIL:**

becker.randi@leg.wa.gov

**PHONE:**

(360) 786-7602

**TOLL-FREE:**

(800) 562-6000

**FAX:**

(360) 786-7819

**ADDRESS:**

115B Irv Newhouse Bldg.  
PO Box 40402  
Olympia, WA 98504-0402

significantly different than the proposal on which I voted.

Some of the specific projects that receive funding in the Senate proposal include [HOV lanes from the King County line to the Port of Tacoma](#), completion of both the [eastbound](#) and [westbound Nalley Valley Viaduct](#), completion of the [Yelm Loop](#) (*you can read more about this project in the [Nisqually Valley News](#)*), and some funding to buy the right-of-ways for the [Cross-Base Highway](#). Again, I'll be working to see that all these projects stay in the final version of the budget as it moves through committees.

**SENATE CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSAL:** Whereas the transportation budget provides funding for transportation projects, the capital budget provides funding for buildings like schools and other public facilities. After this budget was released, I learned to my dismay that several projects that are critical to our district and our schools did not receive funding.

I was extremely bothered by the fact that not one skills center would receive a dime in state money, which is a huge issue not only in our district, but in my colleague, [Sen. Curtis King's](#) district (R-Yakima), which borders ours to the east. These skills centers are "shovel-ready" projects, yet the majority party chose not to fund a single one. **In fact, Senate Democrats chose to "balance" the operating budget by funneling over \$740 million away from capital budget funds.**



I am appalled by this move for two reasons. First, moving funds from one budget to another is like robbing Peter to pay Paul. It's a band-aid solution to a much larger problem, the net result of which is an even larger deficit in a couple years. Second, that money could have been used to fund a number of new skills centers. If we don't look to the future of this state by providing residents with basic education services or skills to become viable, taxpaying employees, we are setting up our state's residents for failure. I'll be doing everything I can to get that funding back into the capital budget so our citizens can continue to be successful.

**SENATE OPERATING BUDGET PROPOSAL:** Similar to the capital budget, the operating budget (which funds all of state government, its programs and services) takes funding from multiple sources to give the impression of balance. On the surface, it looks like deep cuts are made to education, health care, corrections, and natural resources, but most of those cuts are backfilled with one-time funds. That is simply setting the state up for another budget shortfall in two years.

Instead of taking early action to compound savings and reforming the way government operates BEFORE making reductions in programs, Democrat budget writers chose to go straight

to the cuts, and backfill those funds with \$5 billion in one-time funding sources such as the federal stimulus money and transfers from the capital budget. **That is not sustainable.**

Some of the priorities the majority party funded in this budget include:

- More money for state employee health care, but children's class sizes swell.
- Colleges, universities and nursing homes get cut, but state employee wages don't get frozen.
- Illegal immigrants will continue to get state health care but level two and three sex offenders will go unsupervised. **HELLO? ANYBODY HOME?**
- One of the programs that I fully supported in state government was performance audits of state agencies. This budget proposal cuts millions of dollars from performance audits but doesn't target fraud in other areas, such as funding formulas for remedial education.

These are the kinds of cuts made in this budget, and they appear to be aimed at building public support for a self-imposed statewide tax increase on the next ballot.



Washington State isn't all about state employees, or state benefits or programs and services. **It's about people...your friends and neighbors who live in our communities and expect to have the freedom to travel, do business and choose their own lifestyle.** Proposals like this take away from those freedoms by making more and more of us state-dependent. We need to protect our freedoms by believing in them and defending them, and not by creating a system that commits the state to bankruptcy.

### **In closing...**

If you'd like to share your concerns with me or ask me a question, please feel free to send me an e-mail to [becker.randi@leg.wa.gov](mailto:becker.randi@leg.wa.gov). You can also visit my legislative website at [www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov/Becker](http://www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov/Becker), where you'll find a link to my [sponsored bills](#) where you can keep track of what I'm doing. **And please consider forwarding this e-mail to anyone you think might be interested in receiving it. Ask them to contact me so I can add them to my distribution list.**

I look forward to your comments and suggestions on these issues or anything else coming before the Legislature. My office phone number is (360) 786-7602, or you can write me at 115B

Irv Newhouse Building, Olympia, WA 98504. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you in the Washington State Senate. It is truly an honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randi Becker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randi Becker  
2nd District State Senator

